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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004842

SIPDIS

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TAGS: KPAL PREL IS IT KWPG

SUBJECT: ITALIAN ACTION ON MESSAGE TO THE PALESTINIANS

REF: A. SECSTATE 296490

B. USUN 2602

C. ROME 4774

CLASSIFIED BY: A/DCM T. COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) GUIDANCE REQUESTED - SEE PARA 4.

12. (C) UPON RECEIPT OF REF A OCTOBER 21, POST DELIVERED POINTS TO LUCA FERRARI, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE EASTERN MED. FERRARI ASSURED POLOFF THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BE PRESENTED TO FM FRATTINI FOR REVIEW AND RESPONSE.

13. (C) FERRARI CALLED A/DCM OCTOBER 22 TO DRAW HIS ATTENTION TO THE JUST-RELEASED STATEMENT BY FRATTINI ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. THE STATEMENT FIRST EXPRESSED THE GRAVE CONCERN OF THE EU AT CIVILIAN CASUALTIES CAUSED BY THE LATEST ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION IN THE GAZA STRIP. FERRARI SAID THAT THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF THE STATEMENT WAS ADDED IN DIRECT RESPONSE TO OUR DEMARCHE:

"RECALLING THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE BRUSSELS EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF 16-17 OCTOBER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER RECALLED THE NEED FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS -- WHICH REMAINS A PRIORITY FOR THE EU -- TO BE CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND GIVING THE MAXIMUM ATTENTION TO SAFEGUARDING THE CIVIL POPULATION. AT THE SAME TIME, MINISTER FRATTINI RENEwed THE APPEAL TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND THE STATES IN THE REGION TO COLLABORATE CONCRETELY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND TO ABSTAIN FROM ANY SUPPORT -- EVEN INDIRECT -- FOR EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU URGED THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND ITS PRESIDENT TO FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE A NEW GOVERNMENT, THAT SHOULD BE GUIDED BY AN AUTHORITATIVE PRIME MINISTER AND GIVEN FULL CONTROL OF THE SECURITY APPARATUS. ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF A CREDIBLE PALESTINIAN PARTNER, ENGAGED WITHOUT AMBIGUITY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM, WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO RESUME THE DIALOGUE FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AN EQUITABLE AND DURABLE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AN OBJECTIVE THAT THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU REPEATS THAT IT FULLY SUPPORTS."

14. (C) FERRARI THEN NOTED THAT THE USG MESSAGE WAS VAGUE ON THE QUESTION OF WHICH PALESTINIANS THIS SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO. NOTING THE NEED FOR THIS MESSAGE TO REACH ARAFAT CLEARLY, AND THE UNRELIABILITY AS A MESSENGER OF THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN ROME, HE ASKED IF THE USG WANTED PM BERLUSCONI OR FRATTINI TO CALL ARAFAT DIRECTLY. A/DCM REPLIED THAT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT WE WOULD NOT WELCOME A BERLUSCONI PHONE CALL TO ARAFAT, GIVEN HOW MANY TIMES THE PRESIDENT HAD DISCUSSED EXACTLY THAT ISSUE WITH BERLUSCONI. AS TO WHETHER A CALL FROM FRATTINI TO ARAFAT WOULD DO MORE GOOD THAN HARM, A/DCM UNDERTOOK TO SEEK GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON.

15. (C) FERRARI ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE CREDIT TO THE ITALIAN DELEGATION IN NEW YORK FOR SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDING THE INTRODUCTION OF A RESOLUTION REFERRING THE ISRAELI FENCE ISSUE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (REFS B, C). GIVING FULL CREDIT TO THE UK FOR ITS TOUGH INSISTENCE ON SPECIFIC MENTIONS OF TERRORISM, FERRARI SAID THIS CREATED THE OPENING FOR THE EU TO SUBSTITUTE ITS OWN TEXT FOR THE TWO TABLED BY THE ARAB GROUP. WHILE THE RESOLUTION DID NOT HAVE THE STRONG ANTI-TERRORISM LANGUAGE THAT ITALY PREFERRED, IT HAD PRESERVED EU UNITY AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, PREVENTED THE DANGEROUS PRECEDENT OF DRAGGING THE ICJ INTO THE ISSUE. THAT SAID, HE ECHOED THE VIEW FROM REF B THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD ONE DAY BE BACK WITH AN ICJ RESOLUTION. A/DCM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE ITALIAN EFFORT.
SEMBLER

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